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Leyton Business Centre

Unit - 17, Etloe Road, Leyton, London, E10 7BT

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Darussalam

398-400 Coventry Road, Small Heath

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تأملات ابن القيم في الأنفس والأفاق

MEN AND THE UNIVERSE

Reflections of Ibn Al-Qayyem

By:

Captain Abdul-Hameed Al-Qoz

Translated by:

Dr. Abdul-Latif Al-Khaiat



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In The Name of Allah, The Most
Beneficent, The Most Merciful

Preface

Praise be to Allah, the Compassionate, Who made known the Qur'an; Who created man, and taught him utterance; may peace and blessings be upon the noblest of prophets, Muhammad, who was sent to be a mercy for mankind.

The writings of Ibn Al-Qayyem, the celebrated scholar, may Allah give him mercy and admit him to His wide Garden, are indeed in no need of introduction. They are in fact a class apart. The present work is based on one of his books, "Miftah Dar Al-Sa'adah" (The Key to the House of Happiness.) I selected a section of the book from page 187 to 283 of volume one of the Arabic version, that discusses the following four topics:

1. Man, 2. the Universe, 3. Animals, and
4. Nature.

To smooth Ibn Al-Qayyem's writing for the modern reader, I supplemented it with modern material that would appeal to present-day readers. I did so because this is a time characterized by lack of motivation for knowledge, and the material things have so pervaded the minds that knowledge has receded in the same degree. Such a situation takes place at times of lack of faith and dryness of the religious spirit.

In the present work I have given titles to sections, and divided some sections into two, ending up with more than a hundred. The purpose of this, of course, has been to smooth the way for the reader so that he or she will get to the core of the book in the easiest way. I have also referred to modern scientific encyclopedias and to handbooks on medicine and biology to draw from them a lot of

interesting and valuable information that is presented in an agreeable and easy way. In addition, I have chosen fitting illustrations and sketches that work for comprehending the notions under discussion, and accelerate the achievement of the desired aim set for the book. It is well-known that a picture fixes an idea in the mind of the ardent reader, especially when he or she uses the verses of the Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet ﷺ as a starting point for his or her reflections. Ibn Al-Qayyem cites a large number of such verses and traditions, which he uses creatively and efficiently.

I choose this particular book of Ibn Al-Qayyem's, "Miftah Dar Al-Sa'adah" (The Key to the House of Happiness), because he presents in it the art and technique of thinking and reflection, and propounds the ways that should be followed to secure the desired outcome of reflecting on Allah's signs in nature and in the human sphere.

It may be in order here to list some of the techniques of thinking that Imam Ibn-al-Qayyem puts forth in his book:¹

1. Observing, with an open heart, Allah Almighty's creations in both the universe in general and in the human sphere in particular, with a view to better appreciating Allah's glory and comprehending His great power and wisdom.

2. Reflecting on Allah's verses revealed to the Prophet ﷺ and His *shari'a*, to develop an awareness of this religion's superiority and to realize the amazing correspondence between revelation, *fitrah* (human innate

inclination to accept truth), and uncorrupted understanding.

3. Observing Allah's commandments and abiding by His system, which is conducive to preparing the heart to have the purity and clarity of vision concerning what is good for it. Abstaining from covetous looking, for instance, is of great benefit apart from being an act of obedience; since it protects the heart from corruption, makes it exult at the closeness to Allah, strengthens it; supplies it with a light that enables a believer to have perceptive vision, firmness and courage; protects him or her from the designs of Satan, so that a believer is dedicated to considering what is best for him or her. This is so because there is a close link between the heart and sight.

4. Guarding against the danger of sins and keeping away from them, since they distract the mind from proper functioning; it is a fact that the heart will be corrupted if burdened with many sins, and that leads in turn to the corruption of the other organs.

5. Guarding against blind imitation, since such a practice blurs thinking and dulls its activity. Instead, man is urged to focus on the teaching of the Scripture and the Prophet's traditions and to comply with their teachings as exemplified by the upright Caliphs (i.e. the first four Caliphs).

6. Protecting the body from abuse, preserving its comfort, and warding off all distracters.

The above techniques, if realized, will surely secure the attainment of the desired target. Some of the benefits of reflection are the following:

- a.) It is the way to acquiring faith,
- b.) It uncovers the truth about things and shows the distinction between right and wrong,

¹ Hasan Al-Hajjajee, "Ibn Al-Qayyem's Educational Thought"

c.) It wards off delusions and fantasies,

d.) It protects one from sins,

e.) It is the basis for all acts of obedience (to Allâh),

f.) It guides to acquainting oneself with Allah Almighty, His Oneness, His Attributes of Perfection; and directing all worship to Him alone, and

g.) It is the basis for purity of heart while reciting the Qur'an.²

One may add in support of the above, a tradition of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ which says:

«تَفَكَّرُوا فِي خَلْقِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَفَكَّرُوا فِي اللَّهِ».

"Think of Allah's creation, not of Allah."³ (As reported by Aboo Nu'aym in his: (Al-Hilah, on the authority of Ibn Abbas.)

I pray to Allah that the following chapters are worth the reader's effort, that I have succeeded, in some degree, in clarifying the link between the 'ilm' (knowledge, vision) of the classical scholars, and knowledge, or empirical science of the present age, which refers to facts, experiment and concrete evidence.

At the same time, I pray to Allah Almighty that He guides us to what is true and upright, that He protects us from transgression, as He is Able to do anything. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. Peace and blessing be upon Muhammad, upon his family and companions.

Anas Al-Qoz, captain

20 Safar, 1418 A.H.; 25 June, 1997

² Hasan Al-Hajjajee, "Ibn Al-Qayyem's Educational Thought".

³ Rated as a "good" tradition by Shaikh Naser Al-Deen Al-Albanee, in: Sahih Al-Jami'.

Al-Imam Ibn Al-Qayyem

His full name was Muhammad s/o Aboo Bakr s/o Ayyoub, Al-Zar'ee Al-Dimashqee, Shamsud-Deen Ibn Qayyem Al-Jawziyyah. He was born in Hawran, southeast of Damascus, in 691 A.H. (1219 CE) He was a courageous, widely-read scholar; he had an extensive knowledge of the various legal schools, and the schools of early Muslim scholars. He had such a strong passion for his teacher, Al-Imam Ibn Taymiyyah, that he rarely contradicted any of his views; he championed all his ideas, edited his books and publicized his scholarship.

When Al-Imam Ibn Taymiyyah was detained at Al-Qal'ah prison in Damascus, Ibn Al-Qayyem was detained with him. This detention occurred as a result of the conspiracies of Suffis and unorthodox groups. Later, he was subjected to further hardship in connection with Ibn Taymiyyah's legal opinions.

Al-Imam Adh-Dhahabee reports that Ibn Al-Qayyem was once imprisoned because he criticised making a journey with the purpose of visiting Prophet Ibraheem's tomb in Palestine.

Ibn Katheer, a great disciple of Ibn Al-Qayyem's, says of him: "He was constant in teaching and writing day and night; he prayed long and recited the Qur'an long; he was well-bred, courteous, not covetous or malicious. His prayer was very long, and his bowing and prostration in prayer were quite long."

After praying Al-Fajr prayer, he used to stay in his place remembering Allah until well after sunrise; he commented on this: "This is the start of my day. If I fail to sit, I lose my strength."

He used to say: "With patience and conviction one attains precedence in religion."

And he used to say: "A traveller (i.e. towards Allah) cannot do without perseverance to help him go ahead and upwards, and without knowledge to light his way and guide him."

He was fond of collecting books and reading them. His collection was incalculable; his library one of the biggest. After his death, his children sold his books for quite a long time, though keeping for themselves what they liked.

Some of his writings:

'Al-Huda' (Guidance), 'A'lam Al-Muaqqi'een' (Major Spokesmen), 'Bada'iu Al-Fawa'id' (Remarkable Fruits), 'Tareeq Al-Sa'adatayn' (The Way to Double Happiness), 'Sharh Manazil Al-Sa'ireen' (Exposition of the Stages of Traveller), 'Al-Qadaa wa Al-Qadar' (Destiny), 'Jala' Al-Afham' (Comprehension Made Simple), 'Masa'id Al-Shaitan' (The Snares of Satan), 'Miftah Dar Al-Sa'adah' (The Key to the House of Happiness), 'Al-Rooh' (The Spirit), 'Hadee Al-Arwah' (The Guide of Spirits), 'Raf'u Al-Yadayn' (The Raising of Hands), 'Al-Sawa'iq Al-Mursalah' (Ala Al-Jahmiyah wa Al-Mu'attilah' (Thunderbolts Against Jahmites and Mu'tazilites). He also composed a poem of six thousand couplets, which he entitled 'Al-Kafiyah fi Al-Intisar Lil-Firqatin Najiyah'.

He died in Damascus in 751 A.H. (1350 AD) His funeral was attended by a great many people. May Allah give him peace and grant him his favour, Amen.

Chapter One

Man

﴿أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُبِينٌ﴾ [يس: ٧٧]

"Is man, then not aware that it is We who create him out of a mere drop of sperm—whereupon, lo! he showed him- self endowed with the power to think and to argue."

Al-Qur'an(36:77)

Ibn Al-Qayyem's propositions concerning man¹

1. That he was first created from clay, and that his seed was made from a draught of despised fluid.

2. That he was created from a handful that Allah collected from all parts of the earth, so that it contains the good and the evil, the easy-going and the intolerant, the liberal and the miserly. It was Jibreel (Gabriel) who took this handful, then it was fermented until it turned to mud, then Allah fashioned man as He deemed fit. Then He breathed into him of His spirit, so that he was a human of flesh and blood, talking and reasoning...Later on Allah had His angels prostrate themselves before man, and taught him the names of everything.

3. That he was blessed with intellect, knowledge, understanding, eloquence and speech.

4. That he was privileged with the quality of modesty.

5. That he was privileged with two means of expression, the oral and the written.

6. That he was endowed by Allah with the power of acquiring knowledge by several means.

7. That he was distinguished with certain motives and impulses that serve to accomplish what is good for man.

¹ Hasan Al-Hajjaji, "Ibn-al Qayyem's Educational Thought"

8. That man was distinguished with strength, desire and will.

9. That Allah's commandments are to be permanently observed until the day man meets His Lord.

10. That man was not created without purpose.

11. That man is distinguished from the other creatures in appearance and shape.

12. That man is an indivisible whole: composite of soul, mind and body.